

Samogitian dialect

Samogitian (Samogitian: *žemaitiu kalba* or sometimes *žemaitiu rokunda* or *žemaitiu ruoda*; Lithuanian: *žemaičių tarmė*) is an Eastern Baltic variety spoken mostly in Samogitia (in the western part of Lithuania). It is sometimes treated as a dialect^[4] of Lithuanian, but is considered a separate language by most linguists outside Lithuania. Its recognition as a distinct language is increasing in recent years,^[5] and attempts have been made to standardize it.^[6]

The Samogitian dialect should not be confused with the interdialect of the Lithuanian language as spoken in the Duchy of Samogitia before Lithuanian became a written language, which later developed into one of the two variants of written Lithuanian used in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania based on the so-called middle dialect of the Kėdainiai region. This was called the Samogitian (Žemaitian) language; the term "Lithuanian language" then referred to the other variant, which had been based on the eastern Aukštaitian dialects centred around the capital Vilnius; Samogitian was generally used in the Samogitian Diocese while Lithuanian was generally used in the Vilna Diocese. This Samogitian language was based on western Aukštaitian dialects and is unrelated to what is today called the Samogitian dialect; it is instead the direct ancestor of the modern Lithuanian literary language.^[7]

Samogitian	
<i>žemaitiu kalba</i>	
Native to	Lithuania
Region	Samogitia
Native speakers	< 500,000 (2009) ^[1]
Language family	<div>Indo-European <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balto-Slavic<ul style="list-style-type: none">Eastern Baltic<ul style="list-style-type: none">Lithuanian<ul style="list-style-type: none">Samogitian</div>
Writing system	Latin script ^[2]
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	sgs
Glottolog	samo1265 (http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/samo1265) ^[3]

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History

The Samogitian language, heavily influenced by Curonian, originated from the East Baltic proto-Samogitian dialect which was close to Aukštaitian dialects.

During the 5th century, Proto-Samogitians migrated from the lowlands of central Lithuania, near Kaunas, into the Dubysa and Jūra basins, as well as into the Samogitian highlands. They displaced or assimilated the local, Curonian-speaking Baltic populations. Further north, they displaced or assimilated the indigenous, Semigallian speaking peoples. Assimilation of Curonians and Semigallians gave birth to the three Samogitian subdialects: "Dounininkų", "Donininkų" and "Dūnininkų."

In the 13th century, Žemaitija became a part of the Baltic confederation called Lietuva (Lithuania), which was formed by Mindaugas. Lithuania conquered the coast of the Baltic sea from the Livonian order. The coast was populated by Curonians, but became a part of Samogitia. From the 13th century onwards, Samogitians settled within the former Curonian lands, and intermarried with that population over the next three hundred years. The Curonians had a huge cultural influence upon Samogitian and Lithuanian culture, but they were ultimately assimilated by the 16th century. Its dying language has enormously influenced the dialect, in particular phonetics.

The earliest writings in Samogitian language appeared in the 19th century.



The Samogitians and Lithuanians in the context of the other Baltic tribes, around 1200

Phonology

Samogitian and its subdialects preserved many features of the Curonian language, for example:

- widening of proto-Baltic short i (i → è sometimes e)
- widening of proto-Baltic short u (u → o)
- retraction of è in northern sub-dialects (è → õ) (pilkas → pēlks pōlks)
- preservation of West Baltic diphthong ei (standard Lithuanian i.e. → Samogitian èi)
- no t' d' palatalization to č dž (Latvian š, ž)
- specific lexis, like cīrulis (lark), pīle (duck), leitis (Lithuanian) etc.
- retraction of stress
- shortening of ending -as to -s like in Latvian and Old Prussian (Proto-Indo-European o-stem)

as well as various other features not listed here.

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Grammar

The Samogitian language is highly inflected like standard Lithuanian, in which the relationships between parts of speech and their roles in a sentence are expressed by numerous flexions. There are two grammatical genders in Samogitian – feminine and masculine. Relics of historical neuter are almost fully extinct while in standard Lithuanian some isolated forms remain. Those forms are replaced by masculine ones in Samogitian. Samogitian stress is mobile but often retracted at the end of words, and is also characterised by pitch accent. Samogitian has a broken tone like the Latvian and Danish languages. The circumflex of standard Lithuanian

is replaced by an acute tone in Samogitian. It has five noun and three adjective declensions. Noun declensions are different from standard Lithuanian (see the next section). There are only two verb conjugations. All verbs have present, past, past iterative and future tenses of the indicative mood, subjunctive (or conditional) and imperative moods (both without distinction of tenses) and infinitive. The formation of past iterative is different from standard Lithuanian. There are three numbers in Samogitian: singular, plural and dual. Dual is almost extinct in standard Lithuanian. The third person of all three numbers is common. Samogitian as the standard Lithuanian has a very rich system of participles, which are derived from all tenses with distinct active and passive forms, and several gerund forms. Nouns and other declinable words are declined in eight cases: nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, instrumental, locative (inessive), vocative and illative.

Literature

The earliest writings in Samogitian dialect appear in the 19th century. Famous authors writing in Samogitian:

- Józef Arnulf Giedroyc also called Giedraitis (1754–1838) Bishop of Samogitia from 1801, champion of education and patron of Lithuanian literature, published the first translation of the New Testament into Samogitian or Język żmudzki in 1814. It was subsequently revised a number of times.
- Silvestras Teofilis Valiūnas and his heroic poem “Biruta”, first printed in 1829. “Biruta” became a hymn of Lithuanian student emigrants in the 19th century.
- Simonas Stanevičius (Sėmuons Stanevėčios) with his famous book “*Šešės pasakas*” (Six fables) printed in 1829.
- Simonas Daukantas (Sėmuons Daukonts in Samogitian), he was the first Lithuanian historian writing in Lithuanian (actually in its dialect). His famous book – “*Būds Senovės Lietuvių Kalnienu ir Zamaitiu*” (Customs of ancient Lithuanian highlanders and Samogitians) was printed in 1854.
- Motiejus Valančius (Muotiejos Valončios or Valontė) and one of his books “*Palangos Juzė*” (Joseph of Palanga), printed in 1869.

There are no written grammar books in Samogitian because it is considered to be a dialect of Lithuanian, but there were some attempts to standardise its written form. Among those who have tried are Stasys Anglickis, Pranas Genys, Sofija Kymantaitė-Čiurlionienė, B. Jurgutis, Juozas Pabrėža. Today, Samogitian has a standardised writing system but it still remains a spoken language, as nearly everyone writes in their native speech.

Differences from Standard Lithuanian

Samogitian differs from Standard Lithuanian in phonetics, lexicon, syntax and morphology.

Phonetic differences from standard Lithuanian are varied, and each Samogitian subdialect (West, North and South) has different reflections.

Standard Lithuanian ~ Samogitian

- Short vowels:
 - *i* ~ short *é*, sometimes *e* (in some cases *õ*);
 - *u* ~ short *o* (in some cases *u*);
- Long vowels and diphthongs:

- *ė* ~ *ie*;
- *o* ~ *uo*;
- *ie* ~ long *ė*, *ėi*, *ī* (*y*) (West, North and South);
- *uo* ~ *ō*, *ou*, *ū* (West, North and South);
- *ai* ~ *ā*;
- *ei*, *iai* ~ *ē*;
- *ui* ~ *oi*;
- *oi* (*oj*) ~ *uo*;
- *ia* ~ *ė*;
- *io* ~ *ė*;
- Nasal diphthongs:
 - *an* ~ *on* (*an* in south-east);
 - *un* ~ *on* (*un* in south-east);
 - *a* ~ *an* in south-eastern, *on* in the central region, *ō* / *ou* in the north;
 - unstressed *iā* ~ *ė*;
 - *ę* (*e*) ~ *en* in south-eastern, *ėn* in the central region and *ō*, *ō* or *ėi* in the north;
 - *ū* ~ *ū* (in some cases *un*, *um*);
 - *ų* in stressed endings ~ *un* and *um*;
 - unstressed *ų* ~ *o*;
 - *y* ~ *ī* (*y*), sometimes *in*;
- *i* from ancient **ī* ~ *ī*;
- *u* from ancient **ō* (Lithuanian *uo*) ~ *ō* / *ou* / *ū* (West / North / South)
- *i* from ancient **ei* (Lithuanian *ie*) ~ long *ė* / *ėi* / *ī* (West / North / South)
- Postalveolar consonants
 - *č* ~ *t* (also *č* under Lithuanian influence);
 - *dž* ~ *d* (also *dž* under Lithuanian influence);

The main difference between Samogitian and standard Lithuanian is verb conjugation. The past iterative tense is formed differently from Lithuanian (e.g., in Lithuanian the past iterative tense, meaning that action which was done in the past repeatedly, is made by removing the ending *-ti* and adding *-davo* (*mirti* – *mirdavo*, *pūti* – *pūdavo*), while in Samogitian, the word *liuob* is added instead before the word). The second verb conjugation is extinct in Samogitian, it merged with the first one. The plural reflexive ending is *-muos* instead of expected *-mies* which is in standard Lithuanian (*-mės*) and other dialects. Samogitian preserved a lot of relics of athematic conjugation which did not survive in standard Lithuanian. The intonation in the future tense third person is the same as in the infinitive, in standard Lithuanian it shifts. The subjunctive conjugation is different from standard Lithuanian. Dual is preserved perfectly while in standard Lithuanian it has been completely lost.

The differences between nominals are considerable too. The fifth noun declension has almost become extinct, it merged with the third one. The plural and some singular cases of the fourth declension have endings of the first one (e.g.: singular nominative *sūnos*, plural nom. *sūnā*, in standard Lithuanian: sg. nom. *sūnus*, pl. nom. *sūnūs*). The neuter of adjectives is extinct (it was pushed out by adverbs, except *šėlt* 'warm', *šalt* 'cold', *karšt* 'hot') while in standard Lithuanian it is still alive. Neuter pronouns were replaced by masculine. The second declension of adjectives is almost extinct (having merged with the first declension)—only singular nominative case endings survived. The formation of pronominals is also different from standard Lithuanian.

Other morphological differences

Samogitian also has many words and figures of speech that are altogether different from typically Lithuanian ones, e.g., *kiuocis* 'basket' (Lith. *krešys*, Latvian *ķocis*), *tevs* 'thin' (Lith. *plonas*, *tēvas*, Latvian *tievs*), *rebas* 'ribs' (Lith. *šonkauliai*, Latvian *ribas*), *a jebentas!* 'can't be!' (Lith. *negali būti!*).

Subdialects

Samogitian is also divided into three major subdialects: Northern Samogitian (spoken in Telšiai and Kretinga regions), Western Samogitian (was spoken in the region around Klaipėda, now nearly extinct, – after 1945, many people were expelled and new ones came to this region) and Southern Samogitian (spoken in Varniai, Kelmė, Tauragė and Raseiniai regions). Historically, these are classified by their pronunciation of the Lithuanian word *Duona*, "bread." They are referred to as Dounininkai (from *Douna*), Donininkai (from *Dona*) and Dūnininkai (from *Dūna*).

Political situation

The Samogitian dialect is rapidly declining: it is not used in the local school system and there is only one quarterly magazine and no television broadcasts in Samogitian. There are some radio broadcasts in Samogitian (in Klaipėda and Telšiai). Local newspapers and broadcast stations use standard Lithuanian instead. There is no new literature in Samogitian either, as authors prefer standard Lithuanian for its accessibility to a larger audience. Out of those people who speak Samogitian, only a few can understand its written form well.

Migration of Samogitian speakers to other parts of the country and migration into Samogitia have reduced contact between Samogitian speakers, and therefore the level of fluency of those speakers.

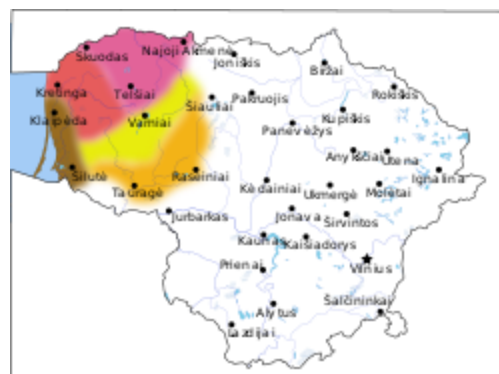
There are attempts by the Samogitian Cultural Society to stem the loss of the dialect. The council of Telšiai city put marks with Samogitian names for the city at the roads leading to the city, while the council of Skuodas claim to use the language during the sessions. A new system for writing Samogitian was created.

Writing system

The first use of a unique writing system for Samogitian was in the interwar period, however it was neglected during the Soviet period, so only elderly people knew how to write in Samogitian at the time Lithuania regained independence. The Samogitian Cultural Society renewed the system to make it more usable.

The writing system uses similar letters to standard Lithuanian, but with the following differences:

- There are no nasal vowels (letters with ogoneks: **ą, ę, į, ū**).
- There are three additional long vowels, written with macrons above (as in Latvian): **ā, ē, ō**.
- Long **i** in Samogitian is written with a macron above: **ī** (unlike standard Lithuanian where it is **y**).



Map of the sub-dialects of the Lithuanian language (Zinkevičius and Girdenis, 1965).

- ☐ Western Samogitian sub-dialect
- Northern Samogitian :
 - ☐ Sub-dialect of Kretinga
 - ☐ Sub-dialect of Telšiai
- Southern Samogitian :
 - ☐ Sub-dialect of Varniai
 - ☐ Sub-dialect of Raseiniai

- The long vowel **ė** is written like **ė** with macron: **Ė** and **Ė**. Image: [E smg.jpg](#) In the pre-Unicode 8-bit computer fonts for Samogitian, the letter 'ė with macron' was mapped on the code of the letter **õ**. From this circumstance a belief sprang that 'ė with macron' could be substituted with the character **õ**. It is not so, however. In fact, if the letter 'ė with macron' is for some reason not available, it can be substituted with the doubling of the macron-less letter, that is, 'ėė'.
- The letter **õ** is used to represent a vowel characteristic of Samogitian that does not exist in Standard Lithuanian; the unrounded back vowel /ɤ/. This is a rather new innovation which alleviates the confusion between the variations in pronunciation of the letter **ė**. The letter **ė** can be realised as a close-mid front unrounded vowel /e/ (**Žemaitėjė**) or as an unrounded back vowel /ɤ/ (**Tėn**) or (**Pėlks**) → **Tõn**, **Põlks**. The addition of this new letter distinguishes these 2 vowels sounds previously represented as a single letter.
- There are two additional diphthongs in Samogitian that are written as digraphs: **ou** and **ėi**. (The component letters are part of the standard Lithuanian alphabet.)

As previously it was difficult to add these new characters to typesets, some older Samogitian texts use double letters instead of macrons to indicate long vowels, for example **aa** for **ā** and **ee** for **ē**; now the Samogitian Cultural Society discourages these conventions and recommends using the letters with macrons above instead. The use of double letters is accepted in cases where computer fonts do not have Samogitian letters; in such cases **y** is used instead of Samogitian **ī**, the same as in standard Lithuanian, while other long letters are written as double letters. The apostrophe might be used to denote palatalization in some cases; in others **i** is used for this, as in standard Lithuanian.

A Samogitian computer keyboard layout has been created.

Samogitian alphabet:

<i>Letter Name</i>	A a [ā]	Ā ā [ėlguojė ā]	B b [bė]	C c [cė]	Č č [čė]	D d [dė]	E e [ē]	Ė ė [ėlguojė ė]	
<i>Letter Name</i>	Ė ė [ē]	Ė ė [ėlguojė ė]	F f [ėf]	G g [gė, gie]	H h [hā]	I i [ī]	Ī ī [ėlguojė ī]	J j [jot]	
<i>Letter Name</i>	K k [kā]	L l [lė]	M m [mė]	N n [nė]	O o [ō]	Ō ō [ėlguojė ō]	Õ õ [õ]	P p [pė]	R r [rė]
<i>Letter Name</i>	S s [ės]	Š š [ėš]	T t [tė]	U u [ū]	Ū ū [ėlguojė ū]	V v [vė]	Z z [zė, zet]	Ž ž [žė, žet].	

Samples

English	Samogitian	Lithuanian	Latvian	Latgalian	Old Prussian
Samogitian	<i>žemaitiu kalba</i>	žemaičių tarmė	žemaišu valoda	žemaišu volūda	zemātijiskan bliā
English	<i>onglu kalba</i>	anglų kalba	angļu valoda	ongļu volūda	ēngliskan bilā
Yes	<i>Je, Ja, Jo, Noje, Tēp</i>	Taip	Jā	Nuj	Jā
No	<i>Ne</i>	Ne	Nē	Nā	Ni
Hello!	<i>Svēks</i>	Sveikas	Sveiks	Vasals	Kaīls
How are you?	<i>Kāp gīvenė?/ Kāp ī?</i>	Kaip gyveni / laikaisi / einasi?	Kā tev iet?	Kai īt?	Kāigi tebbei ēit?
Good evening!	<i>Lab vakar!</i>	Labas vakaras!	Labvakar!	Lobs vokors!	Labban bītan!
Welcome [to...]	<i>Svēkė atvīkė!</i>	Sveiki atvykę	Laipni lūdzam	Vasali atguojuši	Ebkaīlina
Good night!	<i>Labanaktis</i>	Labos nakties / Labanakt!	Ar labu nakti	Lobys nakts!	Labban naktin!
Goodbye!	<i>Sudieu, vōsa gera</i>	Viso gero / Sudie(vu) / Viso labo!	Visu labu	Palicyt vasali	Sandēi
Have a nice day!	<i>Geruos déinuos!</i>	Geros dienos / Labos dienos!	Jauku dienu!	Breineigu dīnu	Mīlingis dēinas
Good luck!	<i>Siekmies!</i>	Sėkmės!	Veiksmi!	Lai lūbsīs!	Izpalsnas
Please	<i>Prašau</i>	Prašau	Lūdzu	Lyudzams	Madli
Thank you	<i>Diekou</i>	Ačiū / Dėkui / Dėkoju	Paldies	Paļdis	Dīnkun
You're welcome	<i>Praš uom</i>	Prašom	Lūdzu!	Lyudzu!	Madli!
I'm sorry	<i>Atsėprašau/ Atlėskāt</i>	Atsiprašau / Atleiskite	Atvaino (Piedod)	Atlaid	Etwinūja si
Who?	<i>Kas?</i>	Kas?	Kas? (Kurš?)	Kas?	Kas?
When?	<i>Kumet?</i>	Kada / Kuomet?	Kad?	Kod?	Kaddan?
Where?	<i>Kor?</i>	Kur?	Kur?	Kur?	Kwēi?
Why?	<i>Kudie / Diukuo?</i>	Kodėl / Dėl ko?	Kādēļ? (Kāpēc?)	Dieļ kuo?	Kasse paggan?
What's your name?	<i>Kuoks tava vards?</i>	Koks tavo vardas? / Kuo tu vardu?	Kāds ir tavs vārds? (Kā tevi sauc?)	Kai tevi sauc?	Kāigi assei bīlitan? / Kāigi assei tū bīlitan?
Because	<i>Tudie / Diutuo</i>	Todėl / Dėl to	Tādēļ (Tāpēc)	Dieļ tuo	Beggi
How?	<i>Kāp?</i>	Kaip?	Kā?	Kai?	Kāi? / Kāigi?
How much?	<i>Kėik?</i>	Kiek?	Cik daudz?	Cik daudzi?	Kelli?
I do not understand.	<i>Nesopronto/Nasopronto</i>	Nesuprantu	Nesaproto	Nasaprūtu	Niizpresta
I understand.	<i>Soprontu</i>	Suprantu	Saproto	Saprūtu	Izpresta

Help me!	<i>Ratavuokėt!</i>	Padėkite / Gelbėkite!	Palīgā!	Paleigā!	Pagalbsei!
Where is the toilet?	<i>Kor īr tolets?</i>	Kur yra tualetas?	Kur ir tualete?	Kur irā tualets?	Kwēi ast tualetti?
Do you speak English?	<i>Ruokounaties onglėškā?</i>	(Ar) kalbate angliškai?	Vai runājat angliski?	Runuojit ongliski?	Bīlai tū ēngliskan?
I don't speak Samogitian.	<i>Neruokoujous žemaitėškā.</i>	Žemaitiškai nekalbu	Es nerunāju žemaitiski	As narunuojū žemaitiski	As nibīlai zemātijiskan
The check, please. (In restaurant)	<i>Sāskaita prašītiu</i>	Prašyčiau sąskaitą / Sąskaitą, prašyčiau / Sąskaitą, prašau, pateikite	Rėķinu, lūdzu!	Lyudzu, saskaitu	Rekkens, madli

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External links

- 🚩 Samogitian phrasebook travel guide from Wikivoyage
- Samogitia (<http://samogitia.mch.mii.lt/index-en.htm>)
- Maps of Lithuania with Samogitian Dialects' Borders (<http://samogitia.mch.mii.lt/KALBA/girdstr.en.htm#Map>)
- Samogitian dictionary (in Samogitian)

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